

STUDY OF KYRGYZ-SOUTH KOREAN RELATIONS IN THE YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE OF KYRGYZSTAN

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Abstract

Purpose: This paper examines the degree of the Kyrgyz-South Korean relations study in the works by Kyrgyz and foreign authors (Korea, Europe, and the USA), identifies the problems that have been analyzed before; identifies a range of unexplored issues in these works. Prior to that, there was no any historiographical analysis of the works devoted to the analysis of Kyrgyzstan and South Korea relations studies.

Methodology: The paper uses 16 different materials on Kyrgyz-Korean relations from 1998 to 2015. These materials include articles, reports, books that dealt with the relations of Kyrgyzstan and South Korea in the sphere of politics, economics, education, and culture. As well as Korean policies towards Central Asian countries, including Kyrgyzstan.

Result: Despite the fact that the Kyrgyz – South Korean relations were being observed in the works of both as by the Kyrgyz and so by the foreign authors, the analysis of the works have shown that the relations between Kyrgyzstan and South Korea in various fields, such as: politics, economics, education, culture, as well as interests in cooperation between the two countries are studied quite weakly. For example, there are no special monographs devoted to the Kyrgyzstan and Korea relations study. Consequently, these issues have remained the subject for further study and it is needed to make more researches in this area.

Applications: This research can be used for the universities, teachers and education students.

Novelty/Originality: In this research, the model of the study of Kyrgyz-south Korean relations in the years of independence of Kyrgyzstan is presented in a comprehensive and complete manner.

Keywords: Kyrgyz-Korean relations, Kyrgyz and foreign authors, Kyrgyzstan, South Korea.

INTRODUCTION

After gaining independence in August 1991, the Kyrgyz Republic began to pursue an independent foreign policy. The basis of the foreign policy of the young state was constituted by “democratic values and ideals” (Imanalieva, 2001: 91)¹. Due to its geopolitical location, Kyrgyzstan began to pursue a multi-vector foreign policy. Not only the neighboring states but also the countries of the West and the East have become priority areas in the foreign policy of the Kyrgyz Republic². The eastern area of cooperation, along with other countries, included the Republic of Korea. South Korea was one of the first to recognize the state sovereignty of Kyrgyzstan. Diplomatic relations between the countries were established on January 31, 1992³. South Korea was one of the priority countries in the eastern area of cooperation of Kyrgyzstan. According to the First President of Kyrgyzstan A. Akaev, the cooperation of Kyrgyzstan with Korea was important for three reasons: firstly, a similar mentality and traditions bring the people of Kyrgyzstan and South Korea together. Secondly, the success model of the Republic of Korea is an example of Kyrgyzstan. And thirdly, the cause of the strengthening of relations with South Korea is the residence of the Korean diaspora in Kyrgyzstan⁴.

Over the years of cooperation, the two countries have established relations in many areas. The parties cooperate in the field of politics, economics, education, and culture. With the growing role of Korea in global politics, and in particular with the deepening of relations with the countries of Central Asia over the past ten years and due to its importance in the foreign policy of Central Asian states, including Kyrgyzstan, the study of their relations is gaining interest (Jenaabadi & Issazadegan, 2014; Somasundram et al., 2019; Torquato et al, 2018).

The relevance of the topic lies in the fact that the work on the Kyrgyz-Korean relations had not previously been the subject of research and the need to analyze the works by the Kyrgyz and foreign authors (Korea, Europe, USA), who have studied the Kyrgyz-Korean relations. The paper examines the degree of study of Kyrgyz-Korean relations in various fields: politics, economics, migration, culture, education, and Korean foreign policy towards Central Asia, including Kyrgyzstan.

¹ L. Imanalieva. Main results of democratic reforms and foreign policy of Kyrgyzstan over the years of independence // Central Asia and the Caucasus. 2001. No.6 (18). P. 88-96. P.91

² URL: History of the Kyrgyz Republic/http://www.mfa.gov.kg/contents/view/id/36 (accessed date: 26.04.18)

³ 키르기즈개황. 외교통상부. 2009.12 = Kyrgyz Republic content. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. 2009.12. p.49

⁴ Kyrgyzstan - South Korea: the identified cooperation priorities (Text) // Word of Kyrgyzstan. -1992. - No.23. (January 29). - P.1.

The objective of the research is to analyze the work devoted to the study of various aspects of the Kyrgyz-Korean relations, identify problems that have been analyzed, and identify gaps. A systematic study of modern Kyrgyz-Korean relations can be divided into two periods: the first period - 1998–2006, and the second - 2007–2015. This paper analyzes Kyrgyz-Korean relations during these periods with a breakdown into topics.

MATERIALS

The paper uses 16 different materials on Kyrgyz-Korean relations from 1998 to 2015. These materials include articles, reports, books that dealt with the relations of Kyrgyzstan and South Korea in the sphere of politics, economics, education, and culture. As well as Korean policies towards Central Asian countries, including Kyrgyzstan.

Inclusion/Exclusion

The materials in this paper were used based on the following requirements:

1. This paper discusses the works from 1998 to 2015 only.
2. Works that deal with the cooperation of Kyrgyzstan and South Korea in the sphere of politics, economics, education, and culture. As well as Korean policies towards Central Asian countries, including Kyrgyzstan.

Exclusion:

1. Works beyond this time frame
2. Other than the above spheres.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From 1998 to 2006, the first works on Kyrgyz-Korean relations were published, based on both print publications and official documents. Representatives of this period reflected in the works a brief, general overview of relationships in various fields. The range of issues studied during this period can be divided into 2 groups: a) a general review of Kyrgyz-Korean relations and b) cooperation in the field of education.

The first group includes the works by S. Toktogonov, K. Toktomushev, J. Kulubaev, and V. Liu, where bilateral relations are discussed briefly.

The monograph "Foreign Policy" by S. Toktogonov was written mainly on the basis of materials from periodicals. The author does not set the scientific analysis of the topic as his goal. However, it provides the first information on the diplomatic and economic relations of Kyrgyzstan with Korea in 1991-1997.

The works by K. Toktomushev, J. Kulubaev and V. Liu (Kulubaev, Liu 2003: 130–136) are written on the basis of official materials, the issues considered in them are identical. The authors described the relations of Kyrgyzstan and Korea in the sphere of politics and economics, education and culture, and also mentioned technical cooperation.

The monograph by I. V. Khalanskii belongs to the second group of works. It analyzes cooperation in the field of education of Kyrgyzstan and Korea, provides data on the links of higher educational institutions of Kyrgyzstan (BSU, KRSU, OshSU, etc.) and Korea. The sources of work were reports from external relations of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture of the Kyrgyz Republic report from international departments of universities ([Sedaghati, F., Nazemi, N., Pezeshk, S., Ansari, A., Daneshvaran, S., & Zare, M. \(2019\)](#)).

The historiography of the first period is distinguished by the fact that only works by Kyrgyz authors are present here, and they are of a general, introductory nature. The authors limit themselves to presenting brief data about the formation and development of relationships. This is naturally, since the Kyrgyz-Korean relations were in the initial stage of formation.

The work carried out in the second period, from 2006 to 2015, is distinguished by a deep analysis of the emerging and growing momentum of the Kyrgyz-Korean relations, and the range of issues under study has expanded. The peculiarity of this period is that the Kyrgyz-Korean relations are considered by both Korean experts and foreign authors. This is due to the activation of Korean foreign policy with the countries of Central Asia. The circle of studied issues can be divided into the following groups:

1. The general analysis of bilateral relations is reflected in the works by Ch. Eshimbekov ([Eshimbekov 2010](#)), and in the monograph edited by A.L. Saliev. Of particular importance is the report of Ch. Eshimbekov. Its peculiarity is that the author analyzes and gives his assessment of the relations of Kyrgyzstan and Korea over the course of 20 years of cooperation. In addition, there are suggestions for improving economic relations ([Eshimbekov 2010: 7–16](#)). The collective monograph, edited by A.L. Saliev, based on the report by Zh.M. Kulubaev and V.G. Liu and other official resources, discusses the main stages of bilateral cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and Korea in various fields. Some constraining problems in relations are mentioned, suggestions are made to improve economic relations, although, the work is of a general nature ([Amze et al, 2018](#); [Muyambiri & Chabaeffe, 2018](#)).
2. Economic issues are considered in the works by T. Otanbaev, Kim Yong Taek, Kim Chang Kyu and Jeong Eun Ok. T.A. Otanbaev, using materials of the periodical press, in his paper reviewed the economic relations of Kyrgyzstan and

Korea in 2008–2009. The prospects for this relationship are also indicated. The work by Korean experts allows us to look at the state of relations from different perspectives, to learn the interests of Korea in cooperation.

One of the areas of cooperation with Korea is agriculture. The senior researcher of the Research Institute of Agrarian Economics of Kazakhstan Kim Yong Taek in his report, analyzing the situation in the economy and agriculture of the countries of Central Asia, its positive and negative sides, considered options of Korea for cooperation in this sector with the countries of the Central Asian region. Korean ambassador to Kyrgyzstan Kim Chang Kyu noted the great importance of Central Asia in Korea's foreign policy, including the importance of Kyrgyzstan. The ambassador lists the areas of the Kyrgyz economy potentially attractive for Korean investments. The problems of cooperation in the economy are indicated, the resolution of which will improve relations ([Ahmadi et al, 2014](#)).

The report by the Director of the Employment Center in Korea, Jong Un Ok, is devoted to the analysis of the situation of labor migration to Korea from Kyrgyzstan. The problem of reducing the number of labor migrants sent to Korea was addressed and measures were proposed to resolve it. In addition, proposals are made to improve the Kyrgyz-Korean system of issuing work permits;

3. The report by the director of the National Museum of Korea Tsoi Quang Sik touched on cultural relations, and drew attention to the state of cultural relations and proposals for their improvement;
4. Issues of cooperation of the Republic of Korea with the countries of Central Asia. The analysis of cooperation with the countries of the Central Asian region also explores various aspects of Kyrgyz-Korean relations. This group includes the works by Bae Kichan, K.E. Calder and V. Kim, M. Fumagali, B. Hwang, Baek Tae-Hyeon ([Fumagali 2012](#); [Hwang 2012](#)). In her book, Bae Kichan, as a secretary of the Korean President on the initiative of North Asian cooperation, notes the importance of "regional" cooperation with the countries of Central Asia in Korean foreign policy. An article by Dr. Kent E. Calder, director of the Center for East Asian Studies at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and Victoria Kim, a researcher at this center, also covers the second period. This article addresses such issues as goals in Korean foreign policy, common interests of Korea and the United States in Central Asia, the role of this region in Korean foreign policy, prospects for relations between Central Asia, Korea, and the United States in a period of globalization. The article used official sources, scientific papers, materials of periodicals on the topic([Ahmadi, A. K., Zamani, M., & Sarzaym, M. \(2014\).](#)).

Assistant Professor of International Relations and European Studies at Central European University M. Fumagali ([Fumagali 2012](#): 69–97) analyzes the ongoing policy of Korea towards the Central Asian region. The article used multiple materials on the research topic. Unlike other authors, he expresses the opinion that Korea has no political interests in relation to Central Asia([Orusbaev, A., Mustajoki, A., & Protassova, E. \(2008\).](#)).

The uniqueness of the article by the professor of Georgetown University (USA) Balbina Hwang ([Hwang 2012](#)) is that it examines the relationship of Korea with all the countries of Central Asia. Scientific articles, periodical materials, news agencies were used. In addition, the article notes the growing influence of South Korea on the region and the tendency towards alliance with the United States, as well as the reasons for the influence of Korea on the policy of this region ([Torquato, M., Araujo, J., Umesh, I. M., & Maciel, P. \(2018\).](#)).

A professor at the Bishkek Humanities University, Baek Tae-Hyeon used in his scientific work publications related to the topic. The importance of Kyrgyzstan in the foreign policy of Korea, promising areas of cooperation are noted.

The works related to the second period switch to a more complex methodology of research on the issues involved. They consider not only the establishment and development of relations, but also identify problems, analyze ways to solve them, indicate prospects for cooperation and, in general, the directions of Korean foreign policy towards Central Asian countries. Most of these works are covered at conferences, forums, by experts in this field, representing these countries, as well as in the works by foreign authors (Korea, Europe, USA).

SUMMARY

After gaining independence in 1991, the Republic of Korea became one of the priority countries in the eastern direction of the Kyrgyz Republic. Kyrgyzstan considered South Korea as a model of success in transforming the economy. The commonality of traditions and the presence of the Korean diaspora in Kyrgyzstan unite two countries together. The relationship between the two countries began in 1992.

The first works on the study of the Kyrgyz-Korean relations belong to the second half of the 90s. Modern relations between Kyrgyzstan and Korea were considered in the works by Kyrgyz and foreign authors. A brief analysis of these works showed that multi-faceted Kyrgyz-Korean relations have not yet become the subject of detailed research. There is still no special monographic research, which is a significant drawback in the study of this issue. Such pressing issues as communications in the sphere of economics, culture, education, migration of working youth, etc., are waiting for their researchers. There is also need for research on the place and role of the Republic of Korea in the foreign policy of the Kyrgyz Republic.

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